

## SMALL BUSINESS PERSONS OF THE YEAR



**Jeanette Otsuka Chang**  
Otsuka's Furniture  
& Appliances  
State of Hawaii

When **Jeanette Otsuka Chang**, the President and owner of Kaua'i's landmark Otsuka's Furniture and Appliances, took the helm of the 65 year old business, not even she imagined what might happen next. After losing both her father and brother to cancer in 1999, Otsuka Chang assumed the leadership of a business that was suffering from marketing, financial and human resource management styles that lost popularity along with the Studebakers that once sold at this store. By empowering her employees, Chang brought new life to their sales. She initiated new programs such as an outside sales person, free design consultations, and partnerships with real estate agents and contractors to boost revenues. Her new merchandising and buying strategies expanded their product line and improved selection. In just two short years, Otsuka's Furniture and Appliances completed its transformation to a trend setting business and industry leader. The business now boasts annual revenues pushing the \$5 million mark and providing jobs for a dedicated staff of 37 people, quite an accomplishment in uncertain economic times! *Nominated by: Paul Endo, First Hawaiian Bank.*

Stepping in as President of Premium, Inc., a wholesaler of disposable supplies, cleaners and chemicals, **Melanie Wong** took charge of a crumbling business in 1988 at the age of 22. From the brink of bankruptcy, Wong's determination and strategic management returned the business to profitability in a year. She computerized office functions and inventory, empowered the staff, instilled teamwork values, and personally set the pace for the sales staff. Premium's high levels of service, extensive product line and innovative approach give them an edge over the competition. Wong focuses on efficiency and productivity to yield high quality results. Today, Premium reports multi-million dollar revenues and provides full time work for 23 employees. *Nominated by: Susan Utsugi, Central Pacific Bank.*



**Melanie Wong**  
Premium, Inc.  
City & County of Honolulu



**Colleen Mandala**  
Pahoa Natural Groceries  
County of Hawaii

President of Pahoa's only natural foods grocery, **Colleen Mandala** stocks a full line of health food items to meet the needs of demanding customers. The store includes fresh foods complemented by a full commercial kitchen providing plate lunches, deli items, and baked goods to the community. Opening in 1977, Pahoa Natural Groceries grew from a convenience outlet serving the plantation to fill the gap from health food shoppers to mass retail consumers. An SBA loan first helped to expand the product line and soon, that growth spurred an aggressive development strategy which included construction of a new 4500 square foot facility. Again, SBA supported Mandala and Pahoa Natural Groceries with a fixed asset 504 loan. Revenues have doubled since the new building was completed. Pahoa Natural Groceries added new employees, increasing the staff over 525% since the company first opened its doors. Mandala now leads a business enterprise which grosses over \$2 million a year in revenues, is the largest employer in Pahoa, and is as proud of Pahoa as the town is of this amazing business. *Nominated by: Gregory Ayau, Bank of Hawaii.*



**Rebecca Erickson**  
Blue Ginger  
County of Maui

Blue Ginger owners, **Becky Erickson and Jill Mackie** have steadily expanded their business since they opened their first retail location in Lahaina in 1983. With nine stores on four different islands, the brightly colored garments in batik-like patterns are so popular that the shops attract locals and tourists hunting for that special Blue Ginger "look." When quality and availability became problems, the sisters established their own factory in Indonesia to produce their colorful, original fabrics and designs for casual tropical clothing. Blue Ginger is now a multi-million dollar company which provides jobs and career opportunities for 70 individuals. *Nominated by: Sharon Osato, First Hawaiian Bank.*



**Jill Mackie**  
Blue Ginger  
County of Maui



**Dennis Esaki**  
*Esaki Surveying &  
Mapping, Inc.  
County of Kaua'i*

**Dennis Esaki**, President of Esaki Surveying and Mapping, Inc., started his company in 1979 to fill a void in professional surveying services and to allow him to return home after years away to establish his credentials. Today, his company is one of the largest civil engineering, land surveying, and planning firms on Kaua'i. He is known for reliability, customer service and handling jobs that others may consider too risky. His diversified client base is comprised of contractors, realtors, private land owners and the government. A growing staff of 12 also allows Esaki Surveying and Mapping to provide a wider range of services than much of the competition due to the array of licenses, certifications, and education collectively on board. The skills portfolio includes an architect, a design engineer, a construction manager, and a helicopter pilot. Esaki uses state of the art technologies to improve accuracy and efficiency. Committed to doing 95% of his contracted work on Kaua'i, he also gives his time and talent to the Contractor's Association, Anahola Japanese Community, Civil Air Patrol, and many others to give back to his community and Kaua'i. *Nominated by: Diana Simao, American Savings Bank.*